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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PTER ENRG MARR IR BA

SUBJECT: BAHRAIN'S KING HAMAD CONCERNED ABOUT QATAR, GCC  
UNITY

REF: A. 09 MANAMA 647  
B. 09 MANAMA 600

Classified By: Ambassador Adam Ereli for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

1.(C) SUMMARY: King Hamad of Bahrain expressed concern about Qatari policy toward Iran and al Qaeda in an hour-long conversation with the Ambassador. King Hamad bin Issa al Khalifa summoned the Ambassador to his residence at Safriya Palace on Tuesday, January 12. In attendance, in addition, was the King's son, Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. The King brought up the subject of last December's GCC Summit in Kuwait. He said he had been alarmed by Qatar's positions toward Iran and al Qaeda, King Hamad said that Amir Hamad made the point during the summit that, "I need to be in touch with them." The Qatari Amir argued that the "unity and stability" of the GCC was his priority: "I need to maintain equilibrium among GCC members and maintain our unity." The Ambassador affirmed Bahrain's importance to the United States as an ally in the war on terror and a partner in regional security cooperation. "I don't know," he replied. "I may be busier now than in the past, but I used to get more information." He said we need a system and urge the GCC to work together to combat terrorism. Comment: King Hamad takes Bahrain's role as U.S. partner and ally seriously, as evidenced by his unstinting support for the Fifth Fleet/USCENTCOM. King Hamad has for some time seen Qatar as a thorn in the sides of Bahrain and the GCC. Bilaterally, Qatar has continued to rebuff Bahrain. Interneccine squabbles among GCC members aside, the issues of Iran and energy security are existential ones for Bahrain. Each has the potential to destabilize the entire region.